SIATRAS NUMISMATIC STUDIES, 8

Edward T. Newell

THE COINAGES OF DEMETRIUS POLIORCETES

Editio nova

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Edward T. Newell (1886-1941)

The Coinages of Demetrius Poliorcetes - ***Editio nova***

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PREFACE

Among the many great leaders who fill the stage during the first years of the Hellenistic Age none stands out more prominently than Demetrius, best known under the popular nickname of *Poliorcetes*—the Besieger. His is by far the most striking figure of them all and second only to the great Alexander in absorbing human interest. A man of unusual ability, endowed with unbounded energy, handsome, brilliant, versatile, he dominates the history of his times. More like some shining knight of the round table in the pages of Mallory than a figure of classical antiquity, he counted his conquests far and wide on the stricken field of battle, on the unstable waves of the Mediterranean Sea, and last but not least in the more pleasant pastures of dalliance and love.

Demetrius was undoubtedly a man of brilliant parts and possessed of more varied abilities than any one of his immediate contemporaries, yet he fell short in just those virtues or personal qualities by means of which the other satrap-kings were enabled to establish, with a greater or less success, their several kingdoms. Less ruthless than Cassander, less astute and less of a financier than Lysimachus, less politically sagacious than Ptolemy, less of an empire builder than Seleucus, less stable than his own father, Demetrius, none the less, possessed many virtues quite his own. First and foremost he was endowed with a magnetic personality which won him the hearts of men — and, it may as well be said, of many a lady too. Combined with this was a reckless, gallant, debonair spirit which made him the *beau sabreur* of his times and an ideal leader of men. Eminently successful where boldness, suddenness and dash meant everything, he was frequently unsuccessful when pitted against some proved or able general well aware of Demetrius' abilities and failings. He showed himself both reckless, yet resourceful, now careless of time and apparently lost in the pleasures of the flesh, the next moment, when danger called, filled with the most astounding energy and able to undergo every fatigue and privation. It is, indeed, little wonder that his career should have been marked by a series of the most extraordinary vicissitudes of fortune. One moment seemingly at the very end of his resources, the next, through sheer ability or some unexpected turn of fortune's wheel, once more the master of a kingdom, soon, however, to lose his foothold, plunging down — yet only to rise again to still greater heights. In time he came to trust implicitly in the infallibility of his star, to accept with complaisance the divine honours paid him by various peoples, to demand the subservience, the pomp and circumstance

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due only to eastern potentates. This, together with his interminable campaigns necessitating immense levies of men and money, alienated his subjects' affections, while his insatiable ambitions roused the fears of his rivals and so brought about their final coalition against him. Demetrius was both the wonder and the despair of his times and to this day commands the admiration and interest of the historian.

To the numismatist the necessarily varied coinages of Demetrius the Besieger present many points of absorbing interest. Their great complexity, however, has rather discouraged the student and, so far as the present writer is aware, no special study of any pretention to completeness has been devoted to his issues. Eckhel in his *Doctrina numorum*, Lenormant in his *Numismatique des rois grecs* (vol. I, Recueil général de numismatique et de glyptique), and Head in his *Historia numorum* have done the most towards the advancement of knowledge on our subject. Their respective works, however, make no pretence at being anything but general, the material at their disposal was exceedingly limited, and the results obtained are consequently of rather narrow scope and vague outline. More advanced from the standpoint of modern numismatic science is the special study devoted to the coinage of Demetrius by Charles T. Seltman. This work, however, as its title proclaims, is only a synopsis.[1] It nevertheless records an advance, although some of the conclusions arrived at must be accepted with great care, as they are based on assumptions which, at best, cannot be proved.

The present writer, therefore, enters upon a subject which others have treated superficially or have shunned entirely, with considerable diffidence. But a serious commencement must be made if we would ever hope to advance, and this is perhaps the main excuse for the present work. On the other hand, the writer has been especially favoured through his long continued studies in the field of the Alexandrine coinages. These have somewhat prepared the way and have placed at his disposal an aid which his predecessors have lacked.[2] Even so, he is only too well aware of how many points still remain very obscure and upon how uncertain a foundation some of his attributions for the moment rest. For this reason the writer asks the indulgence of the reader and student the while he says, as Aeneas did of old, *incipiam*.

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[1] "A Synopsis of the coins of Antigonus I and Demetrius Poliorcetes". *Num. Chron*., 1909.

[2] Mention should also be made of a study by the elder Seltman, entitled "Rare gold staters with types of Alexander III" (*Num. Zeitschr*. 1913, vol. VI), in which he attempts to connect certain gold staters of the Alexander type with the reign of Demetrius. Seltman, however, like so many other students of this knotty problem, has been misled by that *ignis fatuus* the transliteration of monograms into ruler's or mint names. In practically every case his attributions are demonstrably erroneous, or, at best, exceedingly questionable.

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III

CYPRUS

Mint: *Salamis*

At the outset it will no doubt be generally conceded that our intended investigation of the coinages of Demetrius, surnamed the "Besieger", need not commence, at the very earliest, previous to the eventful summer of 306 BC. Although the young Demetrius had for a number of years played a conspicuous role among his contemporaries and had long been his father's right-hand man and his most trusted general, still he certainly had not as yet been in a position to strike money in his own name and bearing his own types. In the capacity of commander-in-the-field — and Demetrius had now on several occasions actually enjoyed such a responsible position, first in 312-311 BC as commander-in-chief of the army in Phoenicia, next in 311 as commander of the expedition against Babylon, later in 307 as commander of the fleet in Hellenic waters—he no doubt, in cases of necessity, possessed the right of coinage. But if at any time he had ever exercised this prerogative, it is as certain as it is obvious that the coinage he issued must have conformed in types and name with that struck throughout the remaining portions of his father's wide empire. This coinage bore only the designs and inscriptions introduced long ago by the great Alexander. At no time, even after his public assumption of the title of king, did old Antigonus strike money in his own name and bearing his own types.[1] Nor did the ex-

[1] Coins of the Alexander type but bearing the inscription ΑΝΤΙΓΟΝΟΥ or ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΓΟΝΟΥ have been erroneously assigned to Antigonus King of Asia. The tetradrachm first appearing in the Rhousopoulos Sale, no. 1157 (Hirsch, XIII, 1905), and later published by C.T. Seltman in *Num. Chron.*, vol. IX, 1909, is merely an ordinary Alexander tetradrachm with the name ΑΝΤΙΓΟΝΟΥ re-engraved in *modern* times over the original ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ. The other coins, such as staters similar to no. 5, Plate XX, of C.T. Seltman's article in the *Chronicle,* and tetradrachms similar to no. 12, Plate XXXI, in Head's *Coins of the Ancients*, are un-

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11. TETRADRACHM (Müller, no. 222).

Obv. — Head of young Heracles to r., covered with lion's skin. Circle of dots around.

Rev. — ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ on r., ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ in the exergue. Zeus seated to l. on high-backed throne. He holds an eagle in his outstretched r. and rests l. on sceptre. In l. field, . Beneath throne .

IX.—*14*. Vienna, 10516, ↑, gr. 16.92; Newell, ↑, gr. 16.96, **Plate I, 15**.

12. TETRADRACHM.

Obv. — Same die as the preceding.

Rev. — Similar to the preceding. In l. field, . Beneath throne, .

IX.—*15*. Florence, Museo Archeologico; Newell, ↖, gr. 17.20, **Plate I, 16**.

13. TETRADRACHM (Müller, no. 219).

Obv. — Similar to the preceding..

Rev. — Similar to the preceding. In l. field, . Beneath throne, .

X.—*16*. Berlin, Prokesch-Osten, ↖, gr. 16.635, **Plate I, 17**.

This second group comprises two varieties of the gold stater and three of the silver tetradrachm. The two staters are connected with each other by the unusual monogram . The monogram , found on no. 9, serves to associate these coins with the tetradrachms nos. 11-13. These three tetradrachms, furthermore, are closely united, *inter se*, by identity of style, fabric, and monograms — as a glance at **Plate I**, **15-17**, will sufficiently demonstrate. In addition, a single obverse die (IX) was used for the production of nos. 11 and 12.

On the one hand Series II is but the continuation of Series I as shown by style (compare **Plate I**, **13** with **Plate I**, **7-10**; **Plate I**, **15-17** with **Plate I**, **12**), the adjustment of dies to the general scheme ↑↑, and the similarity of the monograms (9, 11), (12, 13) and (7, 8). There is also a stylistic bond between this group and a still earlier Salaminian issue, as can best be recognized by comparing the stater no. 10 (**Plate I**, **14**) with the stater 'a' likewise on **Plate I** (= no. 28 of *Some Cypriote "Alexanders"*). It is to be noticed that the monogram (or), common to this group, also appears on the latter coin. On the other hand, our present Series of five coins is closely allied, as we shall soon see, both by style and monograms with the group (Series III) which suc-

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V
CILICIA

Mint: *Tarsus*
Circa 298-295 BC

32. TETRADRACHM (Müller, no. 1598).

Obv. — Head of young Heracles to r. wearing lion's skin head-dress. Circle of dots.

Rev. — ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ on r. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ in the exergue. Zeus seated to l. on high-backed throne. He holds eagle in out-stretched r. and rests l. on sceptre. In l. field, . The whole in dotted circle.

XXXV. — *71*. Newell (ex Philipsen Coll., Hirsch, XXV, 1909, no. 519), ↙, gr. 17.13; Dresden, gr. 17.17; Paris, 1015, ↙, gr. 17.08; Naville Sale, V, June 1923, no. 1441, gr. 16.93; Cambridge, Leake Coll., ↗, gr. 17.11; Newell, ↙, gr. 17.06, **Plate IV, 1**; London,↙, gr. 17.11; Egger Sale, XL, no. 739, gr. 17.08; London, ↙, gr. 16.93.

XXXVI.— *72*. Berlin, Prokesch-Osten, ↘, gr. 16.93; London, ↖, gr. 17.11; Cambridge, McClean Coll., ↑, gr. 17.16, **Plate IV, 2**; Sir H. Weber, ↑, gr. 17.11; Hollscheck Coll., gr. 16.96; S.H. Chapman Coll.; Commerce, 1922, ↗; another in Commerce, 1922, ↖; Newell, ↖, gr. 17.01.

73. Hollscheck Coll., gr. 17.06; Berlin, Löbbecke, ↖, gr. 17.14.

33. STATER.

Obv. — Head of Athena to r. with formal curls and wearing triple-crested, serpent-adorned, Corinthian helmet.

Rev. — ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ on r. ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ on l. Winged Nice to l., holding wreath in outstretched r. and *stylis* in l. To l. . To r. .

H.— *n*. Egger Sale, XL, no. 764, gr. 8.56, **Plate IV, 3**.

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VI

CARIA

Mint: *Miletus*

When the greater portion of his father's empire on the mainland of Asia Minor fell away, immediately after the disastrous day of Ipsus, Demetrius managed, though only by the most strenuous endeavours, to retain his hold for a few years longer on certain of the larger coastal cities.[1] Of these the most important were Ephesus and Miletus. These he held until the utter collapse of his Asiatic dominion in 294 BC. It is possible, as Tarn supposes, that Miletus remained his even down to 286 BC.[2]

We have already learned that for some years previous to 294 BC tetradrachms of the Nice type had been appearing at such mints as Tarsus and Salamis. But these issues were probably intended for circulation in the more easterly portions of Demetrius' realms, and it is hardly likely that the populous and commercially important cities still belonging to him in Western Asia Minor would be left entirely without a coinage of the new type. And, in fact, we actually possess an issue of Demetrius' Nice type, together with the corresponding staters, tetradrachms, and drachms of Alexandrine types, which can only be attributed to Miletus.

In establishing the assignment to Miletus of coins bearing both Demetrius' and Alexander's types, it will be necessary to step slightly beyond the rather narrow limits previously set for the scope of our study. **Plate V, nos. 2 and 3** reproduce two tetradrachms from about the first quarter of the third century BC whose attribution to Miletus is beyond all question. This fact was recognized by Müller, among

[1] Tarn, *Antigonos Gonatas*, p. 12; Kaerst in Pauly-Wissowa, vol. IV, p. 2781.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 12, 99, 105 note 33, 106 note 34.

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VIII

ISSUES OF VARIOUS UNCERTAIN EASTERN MINTS

Before 295 BC

60. STATER.

Obv. — Head of Athena to r., wearing a triple crested Corinthian helmet adorned with a running griffin. Athena's hair is arranged in "cork-screw" curls.

Rev. — ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ on r., ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ on l. Winged Nice standing, holding wreath in outstretched r. and *stylis* in l.

On l., Ⓐ.

M.— *t.* Newell, ex Grand Duke Alexander Michailovitch Coll., ↗, gr. 8.29, **Plate VI, 9**.

61. TETRADRACHM.

Obv. — Head of young Heracles to r. wearing lion's skin headdress. Around, circle of dots.

Rev. — ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ on r. Zeus, enthroned to l.; holds eagle in outstretched r. and rests his l. on sceptre. Beneath the throne are faint traces of a symbol or monogram.

LV.— *101.* Berlin, Prokesch-Osten, ←, gr. 16.40, **Plate VI, 10**.

62. BRONZE.

Obv. — Winged Nice on prow to l.

Rev. — Fighting Poseidon to l. between Β and Α. On l., ΘΕ.

α. Princeton University, **Plate VI, 11**.

β. Berlin, Prokesch-Osten, ↓, gr. 1.86.

63. TETRADRACHM.

Obv. — Head of young Heracles to r., similar to that on no. 61, but of different style.

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Series VI.
Circa 289 – Autumn of 288 BC

87. STATER.

Obv. — Same obverse die as used for no. 83.

Rev. — Same reverse die as used for no. 83, but with the monogram erased. Beneath horse, .

Q. – y^2. London, gr. 8.51, **Plate VIII, 2.**

88. STATER.

Obv. — Diademed head of Demetrius to r., but of banal style.

Rev. — ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ above, ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ below. Horseman to r. Beneath horse, .

R. – *z.* London, gr. 8.47.
aa. Naville, V, June 1923, no. 1458, gr. 8.61, **Plate VIII, 3**.

89. TETRADRACHM.

Obv. — Diademed and horned head of Demetrius to r. in circle of dots.

Rev. — ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ on r., ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ on l. Poseidon standing to l. with trident. He rests his l. foot upon a rock. On l., outside the inscription, .

LXXV.— *142.* London, gr. 17.13, **Plate VIII, 4**.
LXXVI.— *143.* Newell, gr. 16.77, **Plate VIII, 5**.
LXXVII.— *144.* Glasgow, Hunter, no. 6, gr. 17.12, **Plate VIII, 6**;
Helbing, Zietsche & Köder, 1913, no. 324, gr. 17.30, Plate V.
LXXVIII.— *145.* Newell, gr. 16.79, **Plate VIII, 7**.
LXXIX.— *146.* Museum of the University of Pennsylvania.
147. Cambridge, Leake, gr. 16.59, **Plate VIII, 8**.
LXXX.— *148.* Oxford, Ashmolean, gr. 16.98.

90. TETRADRACHM.

Obv. — Similar to the preceding.

Rev. — Similar to the preceding. On l., outside the inscription, . On r., outside the inscription, .

LXXIX.—*149.* London, gr. 17.21; Newell, gr. 16.81 (= Chapman, King Sale, 1892, no. 80); Glasgow, Hunter, no.7, gr. 17.03, **Plate VIII, 9**.

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PLATE I.
Mint: Salamis.